

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for consideration given the present application. Claims 1-8 are currently pending. Claim 1 has been amended through this reply. Claim 1 is independent. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejected claims in light of the amendment and remarks presented herein, and earnestly seek timely allowance of all pending claims.

The Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

The Office Action rejects claims 1-8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Japanese Patent Publication No. 254-127769 (JP '769) in view of Japanese Patent Publication No. 09-89260 to Yamada. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, “a single blower provided in the external circulation path, the blower that makes the gas sucked in through the suction port return to the heating chamber by way of the steam generating unit and sucks the gas out of the heating chamber through the external circulation path to the outside when the door is opened.” The applied references fail to teach or suggest the recited features of independent claim 1.

In the present invention, during cooking using high-temperature gas, the blower keeps generating all the time a gas flow that is sucked from the heating chamber into the external circulation path and is then circulated back to the heating chamber. When the door of the heating chamber is opened, simply the direction of that gas flow is changed such that it flows out through the exhaust port, while the blower keeps operating in the same state as it has been from the outset. This eliminates the problem of a time lag at start-up. Moreover, the gas flow that has been circulating through the heating chamber and the external circulation path readily becomes an exhaust gas flow. Thus, there is also no time lag for changing the direction of the gas flow. It is possible to quickly exhaust the high-temperature gas in the heating chamber and thereby shorten the wait time before the door can be opened.

By contrast, Yamada's ventilating fan 26 is normally at a standstill, and starts rotating only when the intention to open the door is detected. Thus, a time lag before the high-temperature gas starts to be removed is inevitable. As a result, according to Yamada, it requires a time delay before the door can be opened.

JP '769 appears to disclose a steam generating unit (13) including a fan (24) for propelling steam into the heating compartment. See Figs. 1 and 2 of JP '769. Yamada discloses a steam convection oven including ventilating fan (26) on the inside of a flue vector (10). When the door is opened, the control section (16) will output a driving signal to the exhaust means, i.e., a damper, and the ventilating fan (26). The damper (24) rotates so that the ventilating fan (26) may blow air from the heating oven (1) to the outside exterior. See Fig. 3 and paragraph [0012] of Yamada. Yamada also discloses a fan (9) that generates hot wind driven by a motor (8). The boiler (6) is attached to the main part (5) as a steam feed zone. The steam is generated by the boiler supplied to the oven (1) from the supplying cylinder (7). Thereby the food in the heating oven can be cooked by heating with the hot wind and steam. See Fig. 7 and paragraphs [0003] and [0004]. The fans (9) and (26) of Yamada each have different functions. Applying Yamada to JP '769 amounts to newly providing, in addition to the circulation fan 24, an exhaust fan that is normally at a standstill and starts rotating only when the intention to open the door is detected. A cooker having such a structure will be quite distinct from that according to the present invention. Thus, JP '769 and Yamada fail to teach or suggest utilization of a single blower for performing both functions. Accordingly, the applied references, alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest the recited features of independent claim 1.

For at least the reasons stated above, independent claim 1 is patentably distinct from the applied references. The dependent claims are at least allowable by virtue of their dependence on corresponding allowable independent claim 1.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims based on the applied references is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

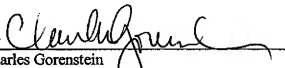
In view of the above remarks, it is believed that claims are allowable.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Obert H. Chu, Reg. No. 52,744, at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.14; particularly, extension of time fees.

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